FRSEM-UA 257
CHINATOWN & NEW YORK CITY

DESCRIPTION: This seminar focuses on the historical relationship between Chinatown and New York City from the early arrival of Chinese immigrants in the mid-nineteenth century to the contemporary period. Through a combination of readings, discussions, oral reports, and field trips, we will examine New York’s Chinatown not only as an evolving physical space, but also as an unsettled social space where ideas and identities have been shaped and transformed by generations of Chinese immigrants over the previous one and a half centuries. We will also explore the interrelationships and tensions between Chinatown and its neighboring communities in New York City. Readings for the course will consist of contemporary historical scholarship, newspaper and magazine articles, novels, and memoirs on the history of Chinatown in New York City, combined with visual materials and site visits. Students will write critical analyses of primary and secondary sources, a footnote analysis, and a research or bibliographical paper.

GOALS: The primary objectives of this seminar are as follows:
• To cultivate a historical understanding of the social and cultural environment surrounding the NYU campus.
• To strengthen critical reading skills and analytical abilities through teamwork.
• To articulate ideas and opinions effectively through persuasive reasoning and evidence.
• To write clear and engaging analytical papers with evidential support.

REQUIREMENTS:

• Class Participation: You are expected to come to class regularly, complete all reading assignments before class, and actively participate in in-class discussions. You are also expected to participate in our field trips to the Museum of Chinese in American (MOCA), Chinatown in Manhattan, and the Tenement Museum.

• Weekly Web Postings: As part of class participation, each week you should submit to the course website a reflection of no more than a paragraph on your reading of the assigned material. Postings need not be in polished form, and you are welcome to focus on one or two of the week’s readings. Possible postings may take the form of a question about the reading, a comparison with other or previous readings, or a response to another student’s posting. These postings are designed to start a dialogue about the reading before class and facilitate our discussion and analysis during class. Postings should be submitted online no
later than 5 pm each Tuesday, and everyone is expected to look them over before arriving in class.

- **Two Brief Oral Presentations:** On a rotating basis, students will present on selected readings to the class and lead discussion, with particular attention to the author’s analysis of evidence or, in the case of presentations on primary sources, to the material’s value as historical evidence. Each presentation should be no more than 10 minutes. No additional research is required for these presentations.

- **Two Critical Response Papers** (750 words, due in class on September 16 and October 7): The first two written assignments center on the crucial importance of evidential support in analysis and argument. They are designed to solidify your analytical and writing skills and also to identify areas for further improvement. The first response paper should discuss readings in week 2 and examine how John Kuo Wei Tchen incorporates Samuel Shaw’s journals in his analysis and argument. The second paper should focus on readings in week 5 and assess the manner in which Tchen analyzes Louis Beck’s late nineteenth-century depictions of Chinatown. A strong response paper should demonstrate: 1) a critical reading of both the primary and secondary sources, 2) a solid understanding of the primary source’s historical context, and 3) a thoughtful consideration of choices made by the scholar in presenting evidence. (For example, is there anything that Tchen chose not to say about Shaw’s journals or about Beck’s descriptions of Chinatown?) Also be sure to provide specific examples from the text to illustrate your point.

- **Footnote Analysis** (1000 words, due in class on October 28): After reading and discussing Emma Teng’s “A Problem for Which There Is No Solution” in week 8, write a close and critical analysis of her footnotes and use of sources. What types of sources does she discuss in this article? Are they primary or secondary sources? (Does she draw a distinction between them?) What is the single most important piece of evidence for her argument? How does she characterize and present her sources? In your analysis, consult one of her sources (such as Beck’s *New York’s Chinatown* or Tchen’s *New York before Chinatown*) directly and assess the strengths and limitations of her interpretation of the source.

- **Final Paper** (2500 words, due on Monday, December 14 by 5 pm): Building on the skills gained through the response papers and footnote analysis, you will write either a research paper using primary sources, or a historiographical paper critically comparing and contrasting different approaches to one of the historical questions addressed in the course. Whichever option you choose, you are strongly encouraged to draw on the course material as much as possible. Your paper should clearly identify its analytical perspective and firmly situate its analysis among existing perspectives on your topic. A proposed title and a one-paragraph summary of your paper topic are due in class in week 11 (November 11).

**GRADING:** Grades for the course will be based on class participation, weekly web postings, and presentations (10%), two response papers (30%), a footnote analysis (20%), and a final paper (40%).
ACADEMIC WRITING & REFERENCING: For the purpose of facilitating discussion of source materials, citations should be provided in footnotes in accordance with the format recommended by The Chicago Manual of Style. The Chicago Manual (16th ed.) is available online via BobCat (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/home.html) and in Bobst Library’s Reference Collection on the 1st floor. Writing advice is also available at the Writing Center (http://ewp.cas.nyu.edu/page/writing.center) located at 411 Lafayette St. You can schedule an appointment online to discuss a draft of your paper with a writing consultant.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Academic integrity and honesty are our most fundamental commitment and responsibility as members of the NYU community. Academic dishonesty of any kind will be penalized according to university policy. The guidelines on academic integrity are outlined at http://cas.nyu.edu/page/ug.academicintegrity. It is your responsibility to read and understand the guidelines before submitting your assignments. Papers should be submitted in both paper and electronic format. Make sure that you provide a full and accurate citation whenever you include the words or ideas of others in your written work. If you have any questions about how to cite sources or how to avoid unintentional plagiarism, please consult the instructor.

BOOKS: The book listed below is available for purchase at the NYU Bookstore (marked as “Bookstore”) and also placed on reserve in Bobst Library. Books that are available as e-books linked from BobCat are marked as “E-book.” Other assigned materials will be posted on NYU Classes at least one week before class (marked as “NYU Classes”). If you have any problems locating any of these materials, contact the instructor as soon as possible.


CLASS SCHEDULE:

PART I: IMAGES AND ENCOUNTERS, 1776-1868

Week 1 Sept. 2: “New York’s Chinatowns.”

- Introduction to the course.
- Historical/historiographical questions.
- Social and spatial perspectives.

Suggested Readings:

- Homberger, Historical Atlas of New York City, pp. 8-51 (chs. 1-3).
- George J. Lankevich, New York City: A Short History (New York: New York University Press,
Week 2  Sept. 9: “Early Encounters.”
Read for discussion in class:
  • Homberger, *Historical Atlas of New York City*, pp. 52-69 (ch. 4). [Bookstore]

Week 3  Sept. 16: **TOUR OF MOCA & CHINATOWN IN MANHATTAN** (Tentative)
(Class will meet at MOCA at 215 Center St.)

RESPONSE PAPER #1 DUE IN CLASS, SEPTEMBER 16

Week 4  Sept. 23: “Curiosities and Stereotypes.”
Read for discussion in class:
  • Homberger, *Historical Atlas of New York City*, pp. 70-89 (ch. 5).
  • Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, pp. 63-96 (ch. 4).
  • *New York Herald*, July 24, 26, August 6, 9, 1847. [NYU Classes]

Week 5  Sept. 30: “The Birth of Chinatown.”

PART II: EXCLUSION AND INCLUSION, 1868-1943

Week 6  Oct. 7: “Labor and Power.”
Read for discussion in class:
  • Homberger, *Historical Atlas of New York City*, pp. 90-111 (ch. 6).
  • Tchen, *New York before Chinatown*, pp. 167-95 (ch. 8).
  • Beck, *New York’s Chinatown*, pp. 57-90 (chs. 6-9). [NYU Classes]

RESPONSE PAPER #2 DUE IN CLASS, OCTOBER 7

Week 7  Oct. 14: “Images and Identities.”
Read for discussion in class:
  • “A Chinaman's Views,” *New York Herald*, May 8, 1877. [NYU Classes]
Week 8  Oct. 21: “Precarious Boundaries.”
Read for discussion in class:
• Beck, New York’s Chinatown, pp. 250-61 (ch. 28). [NYU Classes]

Week 9  Oct. 28: TOUR OF THE TENEMENT MUSEUM (Tentative)
(Class will meet at the Visitor Center of the Tenement Museum at 103 Orchard St.)

FOOTNOTE ANALYSIS DUE IN CLASS, OCTOBER 28

PART III: THE AMERICAN AND CHINESE DREAMS, 1943-2015

Week 10  Nov. 4: “Family.”
Read for discussion in class:
• Homberger, Historical Atlas of New York City, pp. 112-45 (ch. 7).
• Jan Lin, Reconstructing Chinatown: Ethnic Enclave, Global Change (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), pp. 23-54 (ch. 1). [NYU Classes]
• Tung Pok Chin, Paper Son: One Man’s Story (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 2000), pp. 5-79. [Bookstore]


Week 11  Nov. 11: “Defining Chineseness.”
Read for discussion in class:
• Homberger, Historical Atlas of New York City, pp. 146-59 (portion of ch. 8).
• Chin, Paper Son, pp. 83-129.

FINAL PAPER TOPIC DUE IN CLASS, NOVEMBER 11

Week 12  Nov. 18: “Gendered Enclaves.”
Read for discussion in class:
• Jean Kwok, Girl in Translation (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), selected chapters. [NYU Classes]


Week 13 Nov. 25: THANKSGIVING RECESS

Week 14 Dec. 2: “Transformations.”
Read for discussion in class:
  • Homberger, Historical Atlas of New York City, pp. 160-61 (portion of ch. 8).
  • Jan Lin, Reconstructing Chinatown, pp. 107-46 (chs. 4-5). [NYU Classes]

**Class reports on individual paper topics (half of participants)**

Read for discussion in class:
  • Homberger, Historical Atlas of New York City, pp. 162-69 (rest of ch. 8).

**Class reports on individual paper topics (half of participants)**

FINAL PAPER DUE IN PAPER & ELECTRONIC COPY, MONDAY, DECEMBER 14